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Weekly Bulletin



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EDITOR

SAVING EYESIGHT.

By EDWARD F. GLASER, M.D., San Francisco, Member, California State Board of Health.

Because it is noticed that so many people, adult and children now wear glasses, the fallacy has arisen that the human eye is deteriorating and one unscientific man has ventured the rash idea, that perhaps in a few hundred years the human race may become blind. This is far from the truth. Just as the average human life has lengthened and longevity, especially in California has increased, due to the promotion of the individual and the general public health, so the eyes better cared for and safeguarded have become more efficient organs of vision, and less blindness and fewer useless eyes are now to be found than ever before. The last census showed a decrease in the number of blind in the United States and the schools for the blind are showing each year fewer eligible blind pupils. This has been brought about by the great amount of preventive and educational work carried on by doctors, social agencies, prevention of blindness societies, public health workers and by the better understanding in the care and hygiene of the eyes. And by care and hygiene of the eyes is not meant only the wearing of glasses, but rather the proper care and the proper use of the eyes in order to keep them strong and well, and the proper and immediate diagnosis and cure of any of many diseases that may afflict the eyes or be reflected

to them from other organs of the body or from constitutional disturbances.

Too many people seem to think that the wearing of glasses (and too often it is any old pair of glasses bought in any old store) is going to keep their eyes well, not realizing the neglect they are giving to the acute, pathological condition present. So be sure that your eyes or your children's eyes are properly examined by a doctor trained and capable of recognizing and diagnosing the actual conditions and who possesses the knowledge and training necessary in applying the proper remedies, whether medical, surgical or the wearing of glasses. The public should be taught that eye strain is a medical problem, and that no one without definite medical education should be trusted with the differentiation between healthy and diseased eyes.

It is now well known that the eyes are healthy only so long as the body is healthy and that ill health is always deleterious to the organs of sight. For instance, one can not ever emphasize the particular evil of bad health in childhood upon the eyes and in particular to warn against their over-use during the diseases of childhood or convalescence. During attacks of measles and other contagious fevers of childhood, the eyes should be protected from bright light and from close work and the eyes and lids kept carefully cleansed free from conjunctival secretions, preferably by use of boric acid solution. Also the

acute stages of the diseases should be followed by long periods during which the eyes are used but little at close work, for if this precaution is not followed, near-sightedness and astigmatism will likely develop in consequence of the congestion and softening of the ocular tissues. These temporarily physically subnormal children should be kept away from much book or close work and encouraged to spend many hours daily in the open air to tone up the bodily vigor and to rest the eyes. Reading and studying in the morning before breakfast or at least before nourishment of some kind, should be discouraged not only with weak but also well children. The books and magazines read in early life should have large lettering and striking pictures and all playthings and games should be prohibited which have small figures or dazzling combinations of form or color. Children should be taught from earliest age never to gaze long upon any near objects brightly illuminated by the direct rays of the sun. Babies riding in baby carriages and generally lying flat on their backs, should have their faces shielded from the full glare of the sun. All such baby carriages should be provided with tops and lined preferably with some green material. It is a bad habit to have a ball or bright object dangling in front of the babies' eyes as in fixing it the infants' eyes turn in and tend to produce cross eyes.

Children should be protected from all toys and articles with sharp edges or points which can possibly injure the eyes, and if allowed to carry a knife, fork or scissors, they should be taught to always have the point away from them.

Many people's sight is in danger from poor lighting that could be remedied. The ideal illumination for the reader is light coming from behind, preferably over the left shoulder, and striking without shadows directly upon the page, with direct light at no time hitting the eyes which should never be in a constant glare. The best artificial lighting system is that nearest to ordinary daylight. The light should be evenly distributed throughout the room. The method of indirect lighting by which the light is thrown to the ceiling and reflected throughout the room is one of the best. Whatever method of lighting is used, whether in the home, office, factory or school, we should see that our eyes are under as little strain as possible. There may not be enough light and the eyes, therefore, strained in order to see the work. Even the strongest eyes will suffer. Also the light may be good but placed so that there are too many

shadows. This is just as bad for the eyes as not enough light. Light may be too bright and not properly shaded so that the eyes are in a constant glare. One can not look at the sun without causing eye exhaustion. Glaring electric lights are likely to hurt the eyes in the same way. Bright lights should be efficiently shaded.

Perhaps the most important prevention of blindness work, and one that has been the greatest factor in reducing the number of the blind is that done by the obstetrician or the doctor at the time of the baby's birth, and that is the use in the babies' eyes of prophylactic drops to prevent babies' sore eyes or the ophthalmia of the new born. In California the law compels the State Board of Health to distribute free for the use of doctors and hospitals the prophylactic. It is a 1 per cent solution of nitrate of silver in a small wax ampule containing just sufficient dosage for each child. Its almost universal use is shown by the fact that about 40,000 of these ampules were distributed in California during the past fiscal year. It should be a criminal offense for any doctor to neglect to use, or any parent forbid the use of this prophylactic, by means of which the blindness caused by babies' sore eyes or ophthalmia of the new born has been reduced from about 25 per cent of all blindness to almost no new cases of blindness from this cause in California.

California is also fortunate in having a law prohibiting the use of the common or roller towel. And this relic of former unsanitary and unhealthy days is now almost extinct, although one is still occasionally found in some public place, which should be at once reported to the health officer. A paper towel should be used by one person and then immediately thrown away, and all patent devices for supplying towels should be carefully watched to see that they do not fail of their sanitary purpose. The common towel is not only an offense against common decency, but it is well known that communicable diseases of all kinds can this way be transmitted and this is especially true of skin and eye diseases. In the day of the common or roller towel, a contagious eye disease has been known to spread rapidly through a camp, a school or factory.

Health is the greatest of all possessions—a whole cobbler is a better man than a sick king.—Bickerstaff.

When a man assumes a public trust, he should consider himself as public property.—Thomas Jefferson.

Smallpox and Vaccination.

Smallpox is more prevalent throughout the whole United States than it has been for many years. Most cases are of a mild type, but in some of the outbreaks reported, many severe and fatal cases have occurred. California has shared in this increase. Since the first of the present year nearly 8,000 cases of the disease have been reported in this state. Nineteen of these cases resulted in death. At least three cases of blindness, caused by the disease, have been reported in California this year.

Public health authorities state positively, that vaccination would have prevented the occurrence of most if not all of these 8,000 cases. They state, also, that the appearance of this large number of cases indicates clearly that a large proportion of the population has not been successfully vaccinated. They have no desire to create a scare nor do they wish to cause any unnecessary alarm. They believe, however, that it is their duty to advise the public of the unusual prevalence of the disease and give the best and only way that the disease may be prevented. The subject is of importance to Californians and to residents of other states as well for the increased prevalence of smallpox has been reported in nearly every state.

Out of 7378 cases reported in California during the first six months of the present year, 7065 cases were in persons who had never been vaccinated successfully; 243 cases were in persons who had not been vaccinated successfully within seven years preceding their illness and 39 cases were in persons who had been vaccinated within the past seven years. Vaccination histories for the remaining 31 cases could not be obtained.

Modern methods of vaccination against smallpox are greatly improved over methods used many years ago. There has been as great progress made in vaccination as in other developments of preventive medicine. Fear of vaccination is absolutely unfounded. Performed properly, in a cleanly manner, vaccination is a certain and safe procedure. The tiny wound must be kept clean and must be protected against contamination. The only possible danger lies in failure to apply clean dressings and to prevent contamination. This does not occur, however, among persons of clean habits.

Vaccination is insurance against smallpox and it constitutes good business to carry this form of insurance. This talk is to enlighten and not to frighten. If you would avoid smallpox, be vaccinated.

Health Officers to Meet at Monterey.

The sixteenth annual conference of California Health Officers, organized under the Health Officers' Section of the League of California Municipalities, will be held in Monterey October 6 to 10, 1924. A program which deals with important health problems is now in course of preparation. As soon as completed, the program will be published in the Weekly Bulletin. Health officers and public health nurses, as well as others who may be engaged in public health activities, are urged to attend the conference.

The Health Officers' Section of the League of California Municipalities was organized at Santa Cruz, September 21, 1909. The Health Officers' Section has met regularly every year since that time. In 1918, the meeting of the League of California Municipalities was called off, because of the influenza pandemic. The Health Officers' Section met, however, and discussed measures for the control of influenza. Following is a list of the places in which the Health Officers' Section of the League has met:

- First—Santa Cruz, 1909.
- Second—San Diego, 1910.
- Third—-----, 1911.
- Fourth—Berkeley, 1912.
- Fifth—Venice, 1913.
- Sixth—Monterey, 1914.
- Seventh—Oakland, 1915.
- Eighth—Visalia, 1916.
- Ninth—Santa Rosa, 1917.
- Tenth—Riverside, 1918.
- Eleventh—Riverside, 1919.
- Twelfth—Chico, 1920.
- Thirteenth—Ocean Park, Santa Monica, 1921.
- Fourteenth—Palo Alto, Stanford University, 1922.
- Fifteenth—Coronado, 1923.
- Sixteenth—Monterey, 1924.



The first health is wealth.—Emerson.



Advance in civilization is not due so much to happy accident as it is to research and to constructive imagination. It takes less imagination to see the value of chemistry and physics than it does to see the value of literature and philosophy. Benefactors are willing to encourage the teaching of natural sciences who see no value in the teaching of the humanities. The results of the teaching of the natural sciences are direct and apparent. The results of the teaching of the humanities are indirect and intangible. Progress in the nineteenth century was largely dependent upon the study of nature. Progress in the twentieth century will probably depend largely upon the study of man.—Walter Dill Scott, President, Northwestern University.

MORBIDITY.*

Diphtheria.

131 cases of diphtheria have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles 28, Berkeley 7, San Francisco 15, Los Angeles County 10, Sacramento 5, Long Beach 7, Oakland 21, Santa Clara County 2, Orange County 2, Stanislaus County 1, Merced County 1, Monterey County 1, Manhattan Beach 1, Tulare County 1, Sacramento County 2, Redondo Beach 1, El Segundo 1, Alhambra 1, Pasadena 1, Fresno County 1, Hawthorne 4, Fillmore 2, Modesto 1, Merced 2, San Bernardino 1, Alameda 1, San Diego County 1, Corona 3, Long Beach 4, San Bruno 1, San Leandro 1, Del Norte County 1.

Measles.

14 cases of measles have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles 3, Long Beach 2, Los Angeles County 1, San Joaquin County 2, Fullerton 1, Sierra Madre 1, Corona, 3, San Francisco 1, Merced County 1.

Scarlet Fever.

29 cases of scarlet fever have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles 6, Los Angeles County 5, San Francisco 5, Santa Ana 1, Whittier 3, Berkeley 1, Stockton 2, Sierra Madre 1, Fowler 1, San Diego County 3, San Diego 1.

Smallpox.

44 cases of smallpox have been reported, as

follows: Los Angeles 15, Los Angeles County 6, Oakland 6, Santa Clara County 1, Long Beach 4, Fresno County 1, Sacramento 4, Santa Paula 1, Alameda County 1, Redlands 2, San Bernardino County 1, Ventura County 2.

Typhoid Fever.

11 cases of typhoid fever have been reported, as follows: Inyo County 1, Los Angeles 1, Santa Clara County 2, Long Beach 1, Chico 1, Kern County 1, San Diego 1, Benicia 1, Lindsay 1, Tulare County 1.

Whooping Cough.

47 cases of whooping cough have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles 27, Los Angeles County 5, Riverside 9, San Bernardino County 2, Long Beach 2, Palo Alto 2.

Leprosy.

San Francisco reported one case of leprosy.

Poliomyelitis.

5 cases of poliomyelitis have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles 2, Venice 1, Long Beach 1, Los Angeles County 1.

Epidemic Encephalitis.

2 cases of epidemic encephalitis have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles County 1, San Francisco 1.

*From reports received on September 1 and 2 for week ending August 30.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTS.

| DISEASES | 1924 | | | | 1923 | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|---|-------------|------------|------------|---|
| | Week ending | | | Reports for week ending Aug. 30 received by Sept. 2 | Week ending | | | Reports for week ending Sept. 1 received by Sept. 4 |
| | Aug. 9 | Aug. 16 | Aug. 23 | | Aug. 11 | Aug. 18 | Aug. 25 | |
| Anthrax----- | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Botulism----- | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cerebrospinal Meningitis | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Chickenpox----- | 44 | 41 | 23 | 22 | 34 | 13 | 21 | 39 |
| Diphtheria----- | 153 | 104 | 108 | 131 | 112 | 116 | 130 | 104 |
| Dysentery (Bacillary)----- | 0 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 17 | 7 | 2 |
| Epidemic Encephalitis----- | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Epidemic Jaundice----- | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gonorrhoea----- | 108 | 270 | 97 | 68 | 127 | 77 | 62 | 80 |
| Influenza----- | 6 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| Leprosy----- | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Malaria----- | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 6 |
| Measles----- | 35 | 23 | 50 | 14 | 177 | 170 | 167 | 198 |
| Mumps----- | 15 | 10 | 23 | 15 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| Pneumonia----- | 29 | 19 | 16 | 16 | 41 | 82 | 16 | 21 |
| Poliomyelitis----- | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| Rabies (human)----- | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scarlet Fever----- | 50 | 33 | 36 | 29 | 61 | 43 | 43 | 34 |
| Smallpox----- | 68 | 53 | 41 | 44 | 33 | 17 | 17 | 14 |
| Syphilis----- | 160 | 255 | 72 | 68 | 140 | 73 | 86 | 64 |
| Tuberculosis----- | 167 | 156 | 131 | 149 | 108 | 162 | 183 | 104 |
| Typhoid Fever----- | 27 | 8 | 32 | 11 | 23 | 47 | 25 | 12 |
| Typhus Fever----- | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Whooping Cough----- | 55 | 67 | 44 | 47 | 69 | 86 | 53 | 28 |
| Totals----- | 922 | 1062 | 684 | 632 | 945 | 930 | 832 | 725 |

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